



PRESS RELEASE

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May is National Foster Care Awareness Month

Maryland's Human Services Agency Celebrates By Fostering Faith, Hope and Love

Anne Arundel, Frederick and Harford Counties (May 20, 2016) — State child welfare professionals are implementing family centered focus strategies to enhance the child welfare service delivery as it relates to Maryland's Foster Care Program. Children placed in the care of the state are faring better because of the type of services they are receiving. As a result of abuse and neglect, children must be removed from their homes. In Maryland, we are fortunate to have caring citizens who make a difference in young lives by welcoming them into their hearts, lives and home making them feel safe and protected. "It's the quality of care that is making the real difference in the lives of these children," said Governor Hogan.

May is Foster Care Awareness month. It is a time to reflect on the needs of our children and to ensure that they have a safe place to call home. In Maryland, we are taking time out to recognize some of the outstanding citizens who are providing safety and wellbeing during such a critical time in their lives. "When a child needs protection, we intervene with a plan of safety and ongoing security," said DHR Secretary Sam Malhotra. "Our foster homes provide a safe nurturing environment for children in need of stability during a traumatic time."

The DHR child welfare professionals are taking time to recognize those unsung heroes who step up in defense of children and have identified foster parents from around the state who has gone beyond answering the call for help.

On Sunday May 22, 2016 **Anne Arundel County** will be celebrating Foster Parents **Melissa and Jason Boe** who has been approved since March 2014. The couple did not have children of their own prior to their approval. They took placement of a sibling group of three. Melissa and Jason worked to support the reunification efforts by offering telephone calls, emails and extra time at visits as deemed in the best interest of the children Melissa is also an active member of the community and she has worked to bring trainings to

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the county and activities for the children in care. They are the epitome of this year's theme, Fostering: Faith, Hope and Love.

Foster Parents **Melissa Harp and John Hughes of Frederick County** have been licensed since January 2015 and quickly made an impact with the agency. Since their licensure, they have fostered one little girl with some very significant emotional and behavioral needs. Thanks to their structure, love, guidance, and nurturing, the child has made significant strides since entering care. Missy and John are constantly strategizing and thinking "outside of the box" to find ways to help make sure that their foster daughter's significant needs are met. They have also worked diligently to ensure that the relationship between the child and her birth family remains strong. This is a family who understands the importance of commitment to children, no matter how hard things get. They truly have gone above and beyond to work with the team in supporting this child and her family.

Harford County will be recognizing **Sarah and Daniel Owens** who became foster parents in September 2015. They opened their home with the desire to provide a safe, nurturing environment for a sibling group. They had always had a desire to help, but had no family living in the area. They talked to their pastor about their desire to foster and with support and encouragement they moved forward and became a foster family. The Owens helped successfully transition an infant to a relative placement after four months. They worked with the relatives providing them information and encouragement as the child moved to their home. They are a foster family that gives of themselves because of their Faith, Hope and love of family.

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